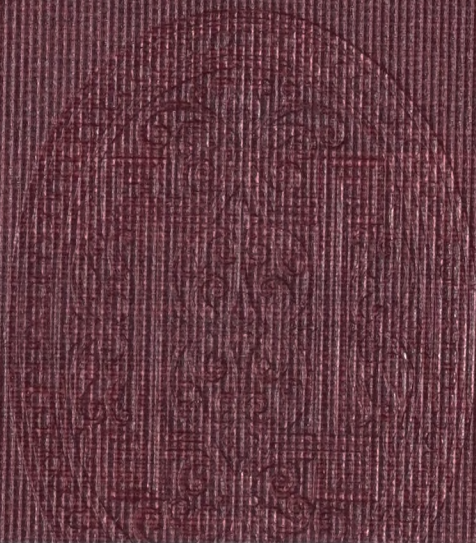


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# THE JUDGMENT OF GOD





# THE JUDGMENT OF GOD

AN HISTORICAL LITTLE  
NOVEL

BY  
J. RUSSELL, *friend*

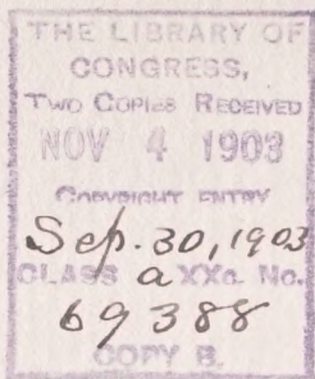


THIS STORY DEALS WITH THE TAK-  
ING OF JERUSALEM BY THE  
CHRISTIANS



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VOLUME 1

CHAPTER I



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## THE JUDGMENT OF GOD

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On the Spanish side of the Pyrenees not far from the ridge of mountains known in Cataluna as the "Coll de Nuria," flourished early, in the twelfth century a medium-sized village called Ern, some vestiges of which still exist. Count Guillen, governor at that time of the provinces of Urgel and Cerdena, both tributary to Barcelona, had chosen this place for his permanent abode; a

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point desirable not only for its pleasant situation, but also on account of the confidence with which it inspired his vassals who had nothing to fear from the Mussulmans, since the latter were defeated in the Battle of Bellevert.

The first faint rays of a serene summer morning revealed the figure of a youthful cavalier among the ruins of a hermitage. His aspect proclaimed him a warrior. Some appointment, doubtless, accounted



for his presence there; for now and again he scaled the crumbling walls, and after a minute survey of his surroundings, descended exclaiming mournfully, N.,——nothing——”

Three times his keen eyes searched the forest paths, and then as though convinced that it was useless to tarry longer, he walked musingly toward his horse which was grazing near the ruins.

“Nothing!” he repeated with another earnest glance

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in the direction of the forest. I have lost all—— yes, all ! For her failure to keep this appointment is proof of the indifference with which she regards me.” His voice was husky and a tempest of emotion convulsed his features.

Mounting, he continued aloud. “The last one!— Farewell, beloved country; if I had to struggle only against the perfidy of Lanuza, I would never abandon thee; but my heart is breaking for the



faithless Almodia.”

And swiftly as an arrow the young horseman departed. His last words were lost upon the wind, and only a mournful Adios floated back.

A few rods distant, the rider suddenly drew rein, attracted by a figure clad in white, which glided from the shelter of the forest.

“It is you, Almodia !” he exclaimed, dismounting hastily. “Ah ! if you but knew how much I have

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suffered in these two hours!  
I looked for you at day-break and——”

“Montaner,” interrupted the white-robed figure, “Do not waste precious moments in idle complaining. Lanuza knows that you are here, and even now you may fall into his clutches. Hasten to the wolf’s cave and wait for me there. I have something of importance to reveal to you. “I go, Almodia, because your will is my law.”



Again the cavalier rode like the wind, and was soon lost to view on the winding road.

II

On the side of the lofty Nurian highlands is an extensive cavern known only to the inhabitants of the province, for its entrance is concealed by dense foliage. They called it the "Cave of the wolf," because, according to the shephard's tradition, it served as the lair of a precious wolf which long

eluded the vigilance of wary huntsmen.

Montaner and Almodia were seated at the foot of a rock within the cave.

“Alas,” the young girl was saying, “will your cruel doubts ever cease?”

“Forgive me, Almodia mia,” replied the cavalier humbly, “if the intensity of my love fills my brain with wild doubts when you are not with me at the appointed hour. But tell me,” he added after an instant, “how did Lanuza,



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learn our trysting-place ? ”

“ I have reason to believe that he has bribed our confident, Ramon, with gifts ; for last night I saw them conversing in confidential whispers.”

“ Ramon ! ” cried Montaner in surprise, “ our faithful Ramon ! Impossible ! Ramon a traitor ? But no one else was aware of our projected interview and—”

Silence succeeded the warrior’s words. Wrapped in profound meditation, he sat for some time with his

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head resting in his hands and his elbows supported upon a rock; at length he said: "Tell me now, Almodia, the significance of your warning in the forest."

I would spare myself a repetition odious in my ears, but the aspect of affairs, is so serious, Montaner, that it is imperative for you to hear all. Lanuza has defamed and persecuted you until my father has declared you a traitor and offered a reward for your head——You thought his



hatred the effervescence of the old quarrel with your father; but you were mistaken: Lanuza hates you because I love you."

"Because you love me? Does he?——

"Yes, he loves me, and has told me so, more than once. I believed that my frigid indifference would quench his ardor; but, no. Last night he said: Almodia, you have rejected the deepest affection in the power of mortal to offer you, not through any un-

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worthiness of mine, but on account of your mad preference for that traitor, Montaner, upon whose head the Count has set a price. But while he treads the soil of Urgel or Cerdana his death is certain, and he will soon be overtaken.

Then he left me, his warning of an approaching catastrophe ringing in my ears. Just then a rustling sound attracted my attention, the cause of which I ascertained to be a piece of



paper that had been slipped under the door. Upon it was written: "Montaner must be seized at seven tomorrow morning at the hermitage at Nuria. Without pausing to consider the source of the communication I went immediately in search of Ramon and found him talking with Lanuza. I felt confident that he sold our secret, and as neither of them was aware of my presence, I concealed myself behind the tapestry. But only

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Ramon's voice was audible. "Have no fear," he said, "we shall accomplish it easily and return by eleven" Lanuza appeared well satisfied. Then I heard him murmur something in connection with your name and mine. I came at day-break to warn you, but fearful lest some one lurking in ambush should detain me, I crossed the woods and lost my way. Therefore, as you see, my delay is explained."

"Ah" replied the cava-



lier, "a cruel destiny has left me with nothing to hope but for death. That is all, cara mia; God grant I may meet it bravely. Everywhere I see scaffolds rising to demand my life; the very ground yawns like a grave beneath my feet. The time was when I aspired to fold you to my heart and call you wife. Then I was happy. Your name inspired me with courage, and I coveted the laurels of victory to crown your angelic brow. But,

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ah ! How soon my dreams of fame and happiness have vanished. A terrible reality points to the tomb, where sweet illusions are swallowed up in darkness. It was a mad audacity that led this poor plaything of fortune to aspire to the hand of Count Guillen's daughter. Adios Almodia, may heaven favor you with a husband worthy of you."

The young cavalier's voice was choked with sobs. He raised Almodia's



hand to his lips and was about to hurry from the cave when she almost shrieked:—

“Stay, Montaner ! What will become of me if you abandon me? Within a few days my father will set out with ten thousand warriors to join Godfrey’s army in the conquest of Jerusalem! Then I shall be alone at the mercy of the tyrant!— She buried her face in her hands and wept bitterly, unable to restrain moans of anguish which were like

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sword-thrusts in the heart of the unhappy Montaner.

At that moment a roar of pain resounded through the cavern, and at the entrance, two eyes glowed like living coals. It was the wolf.

The blood was flowing freely from a fresh wound, and the arrow which still quivered in its side rendered the animal furious.

Before the young man could unsheathe his sword the infuriated beast sprang toward the Count's daugh-



ter; but Montaner intercepted the leap, and seizing it by the throat, flung the creature, grasping in its death-struggle, at Almodia's feet.

The girl was speechless with amazement for some time after the wolf's howls of agony had ceased. As her self-possession returned, she fixed her beautiful eyes shining with gratitude upon Montaner.

The rapidity of his action had impressed her deeply. Death, a horrible

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death, had been converted suddenly into another victory for her lover. In the young girl's eyes, he no longer bore the semblance of an ordinary mortal; he had become an invincible hero, the heaven appointed guardian of her life.

This pleasing revery was soon rudely interrupted by the cries of the hunters in pursuit of the wolf.

Almodia gave a startled cry as she recognized the soldiers of Lanuza's guard,



who, with bows curved, halted near the cavalier.

“I suppose that you have come to slay the wolf, but the work is already accomplished,” said the latter, pointing to the lifeless animal whose half-opened eyes seemed, still, to threaten its pursuers.

Montaner's words were followed by a profound silence which lasted several minutes. At last, one of the recent comers exclaimed: “By all the Saints in Christendom, friends,

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I deserve to be made cardinal by our worthy master, Lanuza, for having led you into this retreat! Our journey has not been in vain; for if I am not mistaken, this gentleman before us is the very bird we came to seek. Vamos Senor Montaner; come along with us, for Senor Lanuza has provided excellent accommodations—”

Montaner, unable to restrain his rage, sprang toward the speaker with drawn sword. The soldier



receded, and instantly nine arrows aimed at his breast convinced the cavalier that resistance was useless. Moreover, to risk an encounter in such close quarters, would be to endanger the life of his adored Almodia.

He faltered an instant; honor forbade him to yield without a struggle; but the safety of Count Guillen's daughter demanded immediate surrender.

While these conflicting emotions were raging in

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his breast, he looked sorrowfully at Almodia, who was contemplating the scene in silence. Her lover's glance recalled her to a sense of the situation. With tearful eyes and crimson cheeks she arose tremblingly and took his hand, saying: "Do not despair, Montaner; my father is not cruel. I will kneel at his feet and bathe them in my tears: I will tell him that, to you, he owes his daughter's life." And withdrawing her hand



she murmured a mournful Adios and left the cave. Montaner and the soldiers followed.

III

Two days after the imprisonment of Montaner, two figures were seen at a very late hour gliding among the ruins of the hermitage at Nuria. Dense clouds, black as ink, obscured the heavens; zigzag lightning darted luridly across the sky, followed by peals of thunder which echoed dismally among the

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ruins.

“ Senora, said one of the travellers, why will you undertake a journey at this unseasonable hour, with a storm threatening to break over our heads at any moment ?”

“ Do not try to persuade me to return, Ines dear,” replied the other. “ I will never again set foot in the house which shelters my husband’s murderer. Do you think I fear the storm? No, amiga; this lightning which has such terrors for



you, the thunder which threatens to uproot the very mountains, and the torrents of rain already descending upon us, are but admonitions of a Divine wrath before which Lanuza will some day tremble for his crimes.”

Almodia's last words were cut short by a prolonged peal of thunder. Ines urged her to seek shelter; she did not reply, but suffered herself to be led under a half-ruined arch where the two

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women remained for some time in silence, the one terrified by the storm, the other absorbed in her own thoughts.

Suddenly the sound of footsteps caught the quick ear of the Count's daughter. Her glance traversed the ruins with lightning rapidity; she gave a cry of horror, and precipitated herself into her friend's arms, shrieking: "There he is! There he is!" Ines directed a searching glance around her but



perceived nothing.

“I saw him, repeated her companion.”

“But who, Senora?”

“That misterious soldier whom Lanuza employed to kill Montaner. It is he who commanded the force that surprised us in the wolf’s cave. But although his gigantic stature seems familiar, I have never been able to see his face.

For two days he has been spying upon my movements; and if he is

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not the treacherous Ramon, he must be the incarnation of evil."

"Holy mother," cried Ines crossing herself devoutly, and covering her face with her hands. Then, for a long time, nothing was heard but the raging of the tempest.

It seemed incredible that those two women shrinking among the ruined walls, braving the discomforts of that tempestuous night, their garments drenched with rain, should



belong to the two most illustrious families in Cerdena. A warm friendship had existed between them from infancy, and they had vowed never to separate. Ines kept her pledge. After Montaner's imprisonment Lanuza ordered him beheaded immediately. Count Guillen was absent and Almodia was powerless to prevent the death of him whom she called her husband.

The mysterious soldier to whom she had alluded

in her conversation with Ines had been charged with the execution of Lanuza's cruel order; and taking possession of his victim securely bound and surrounded by soldiers, he set out for an impenetrable thicket on the steepest slope of the Nurian ridge.

Arrived there, he commanded his soldiers, to await his return, and accompanied only by the prisoner plunged into the woods.

Seven hours later he was



relating to Lanuza how he had dispatched Montaner with his own hand, and thrown his body into a mountain gorge.

The unwelcome news circulated rapidly in Ern, and was not long in reaching the ears of Almodia. Yielding to the first impulses of uncontrollable grief, she attired herself in mourning and tearfully pleaded with Ines to accompany her to a convent in which her aunt was abbess. Ines, employing all the

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persuasive power of friendship, entreated Almodia to abandon her decision but in vain; and as the reader is aware, the storm overtook them near the hermitage.

The fury of the tempest began to abate, the clouds were dispersing, and the rumble of the thunder became fainter. Almodia was watching an opportunity to continue her journey, screened by the darkness from the prying eyes of Lanuza's guard;



but the second appearance of the remarkable aforementioned entity, froze her with horror.

She drew nearer to Ines, clutching her arm convulsively and talking continually of her bereavement.

“It was here, Ines mia,” she said, “here in these ruins that Montaner and I pledged our love. But Montaner is dead, and this place, once so full of tender memories, is now horrible.

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If the same sword that took my husband's life had but taken mine also, our spirits would have winged their flight together, and in heaven we should have enjoyed the happiness that has been snatched from us here.

But now I am condemned to drag out a miserable existence; y e s Ines, miserable; although you may not comprehend my meaning; because you, who have never loved, cannot conceive the bit-



teness of outliving one dearer than life.

Accustomed to a life of luxury, I am now without shelter over my head, other than this tottering arch, or without consolation for my misfortune other than death."

"Cristo nos favorezca!" cried Ines at the sound of a terrific crash of thunder; at the same time the arch swayed, and trembled to its very foundations; the next moment the young girls were prisoners amid

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the ruins.

### IV

“Hello, friend Rius, you in Palestine? Indeed I little dreamed that you have followed the army, for the wounds that you received in the Battle of Bellevert were sufficient to leave you disabled.”

“Ah, you are, Fonseca?”

“The same; who will remain here fighting until, at the conclusion of the war, we are ready to return to Spain.”



These words were exchanged between two gentlemen who had met about two hundred feet from the walls of the Holy City.

Seating themselves upon the velvety turf beneath the shade of a fig tree, they began to relate their adventures, but were immediately interrupted by a youth of some twenty years who had come directly from the city.

“Salud, amigos; I bring news that cannot fail to

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please you. To morrow we set out upon the most dangerous expedition yet undertaken in this war.

Count Guillen proud of his victories, but dissatisfied with having been only the third, instead of the first, to force an entrance into Jerusalem when we assaulted the plaza, had determined to surpass the feat of the French generals before retiring. You of course remember the famous city of Arcas which Godfrey with his formidable army



was unable to conquer? Well, to morrow our force of ten thousand Spaniards will take possession of Arcas or perish in the attempt.

So Count Guillen has sworn, and you know that he never breaks an oath. But we shall have a valuable and unexpected assistant; for the unknown soldier who accomplished prodigies of valor in the Battle of Ascalon, will accompany us. He has just offered the Count his sword,

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on the condition that the latter will never ask him to reveal his name or raise his visor; and who the devil do you suppose he is"? asked Rius. "I believe it is Strausberg; the unfortunate Montaner's friend."

"I have thought the same thing more than once," replied Fonseca.

"Well, friends" continued the youth "I will add my opinion to yours, and I assure you, furthermore that Count Guillen and



the other Generals think as we do."

And the three cavaliers, satisfied with their solution of the mystery of the unknown combatant, began to examine the city before them, each one proposing a different plan for the capture of the impregnable Arcas.

When Guillen communicated his plan to the other Generals, they pronounced it, a rash enterprise, and some went so far as to call it madness.

The following morning the Count of Urgel and Cerdena departed with his ten thousand warriors to crown the work of the Christians, routing the Infidels from their last and most impregnable stronghold.

### V

Three weeks had elapsed since the army of Catalonia had planted its standard before the walls of Arcas, and yet nothing had been achieved. On



the contrary, its situation was one of imminent peril.

The city was defended by a strong garrison, and without its walls, was an army comprising the remainder of the Infidels whose number was double that of the Spaniards. The latter annoyed the Christians incessantly, now attacking their camp, and again intercepting their convoys.

The entire country for a radius of several miles had been pillaged, and

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offered no resources whatever. Among the charred forests, the desolated villages, and devastated fields, there was hardly sufficient forage for the cavalry; and provisions becoming scarce in the Spanish army, the only course open to it, was to besiege the city and penetrate to the plaza.

Guillen summoned the leaders to a council, laying before them the urgency of the situation, and his resolve to attack the city; adding, that he



preferred to perish fighting rather than become the jest, not only of his enemies, but also of the generals in the entire army of Crusaders.

The officers applauded, and pledge themselves to triumph or die with the Count, and it was at length determined to commence the attack whithin three days.

Count Guillen's initial movement was to despatch a body of cavalry to force an entrance into the city.

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With infinite difficulty they succeeded in burning one of the gates. The efforts of the besieged to impede the progress of the flames were fruitless.

The excessive heat and thick clouds of smoke rendered it impossible for them to reach the wall; while the besiegers, profiting by the advantage, worked with indefatigable zeal under the esplanade, in order that they might quickly lower the bridge and cross the moat as soon



as the flames subsided.

At length the fire ceased to rage, and at a signal of the bugle, the Count and his men rushed in precipitately. The former had scarcely succeeded in introducing a hundred horsemen within the walls, when the Moslems closed around the gate to intercept their passage; and from the two lofty towers beside the entrance, others hurled upon the bridge, amid showers of arrows, beams, and melted pitch;

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anything in fact, that their fury suggested.

After a long struggle the Infidels obtained control of the gate. The loyal retainers of Cataluna rendered frantic at sight of their leader's peril, flung themselves from their horses and dashed furiously upon the impenetrable mass of Moslems. But their efforts were in vain; Guillen and his reduced force were prisoners within the walls.

But while they were



struggling to defend themselves from a foe apparently as numerous as the sands of the sea, the unknown warrior, thought to be the valliant Strausberg, to whom Guillen had entrusted the command of a division, perceived the futility of striving to control the entrance, so long as the defenders were in possession of the towers; and shrewdly calculating that they had abandoned the more remote walls to flock to the gates,

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he quickly resolved to test his plan, and directed his men, armed with ladders, to a remote quarter of the city.

In vain the besieged run to defend the abandoned wall; Strausberg is the first to reach the top, and followed by his soldiers, destroys, step by step, all that impedes their progress.

Encountering a huge heap of stones which the enemy had collected to hurl down upon the



Christians, he climbs by means of them to a tower, slays the defenders, and tearing down the blood stained standard of the Prophet, casts into the ditch below, and unfurls in its place the triumphant banner of Cataluna, the ensign of the cross.

When they beheld that emblem of victory waving over the highest turret of the city the Spaniards took heart, and attacked the entrance with redoubled fury.

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The Musulmans rushed to the scene of conquest, but Strausberg met them with an unyielding force, and the combat was renewed; until at length, the bridge being lowered across the ditch, the Christian army poured into the city, whose last defender fell beneath its sword.

Guillen snatched from the jaws of death, and, in the end, victorious when he least expected it, could hardly believe his senses.



He shed tears of joy, embracing his soldiers; and asking for the unknown cavalier to whom he owed his unexpected triumph, proclaimed him "Knight of the Eagle" and Commander-in-chief of the armies of Cerdena and Urgel.

A few days later the Count yielded the city of Arcas to the Crusaders and embarked with his army for Spain.

VI

A month had elapsed

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since the Count's return to Puigcerda; yet in spite of untiring efforts to obtain a clue of his daughter, and large rewards offered for information concerning her, her disappearance remained shrouded in mystery, and her father ordered the Court draped in black.

Overcome with grief, he had forgotten the very existence of the "Knight of the Eagle", who was awakening universal curiosity.

The latter was passing



through a dense grove a few days after his arrival in Spain, when a soldier of gigantic stature, in complete armor, stepped up to him, and without raising his visor, handed him a letter. Strausberg took it and read as follows: Caballero: if you desire to learn something of supreme interest to you, listen to the bearer of this paper, but on no account interrupt him.

Strausberg studied the handwriting, but was un-

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able to conjecture the writer; and at length, inspecting the bearer critically from head to foot he said: "Unknown friend, I am prepared to hear whatever you have to tell me and I promise not to interrupt you."

There upon the two men betook themselves to the refreshing shade of the grove where they enjoyed a long conversation; and judging from their manifestations of surprise and satisfaction, its subject was



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of vital interest.

### VII

Every passing day found Count Guillen more and more despondent, and never doubting but that his daughter was dead, as we have said before, he ordered his retainers to attire themselves in mourning and summoned all of the nobles to his palace in order that the funeral rites might be celebrated with due solemnity.

In the principal salon, seated upon a black velv-

et throne, w a s Count Guillen, and at his side, Lanuza, who was addressing him.

“I believe, Senor” he was saying, “that none but the friends of Montaner have committed the horrible crime of taking your daughter’s life.”

Upon what are your suspicions against Montaner’s friends founded?” inquired the Count.

“Upon what, Senor?” I will tell you. When you were absent soliciting



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the permission of the Count of Barcelona to depart for the Holy Land, Montaner seized the princess and dragged her to the wolf's cave.

My faithful guard followed him thither, and despite his resistance, made him a prisoner, thus saving your daughter's honor.

Montaner paid dearly for his crimes; but at the same time Almodia disappeared. If the traitor's friends had not aided him,

senor, it would have been impossible for him to seize the princess. These same friends, do not doubt it, have sacrificed your daughter to avenge Montaner."

"It is a lie, you coward, a lie!" cried a deep voice from the midst of the assemblage.

Every eye was directed toward the speaker, who was none other than the "Night of the Eagle." Availing himself of the privilege of his rank, he



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had come to the palace clad in his customary armor. With head erect, a black plume floating from his helmet he strode through the throng and stood face to face with Lanuza; in a voice choking with rage he repeated: "It is a lie, you infamous villain!"

And then, addressing the Count, he added: "Senor, your daughter lives."

"My daughter lives.?" interrupted the Count, springing from his seat;

“where is she, where?”

“Calm yourself a moment, Senor, and you shall know all. The unfortunate Montaner loved your daughter and his affection was reciprocated. Lanuza loved her also, and in order to win her hand, persuaded you to believe that Montaner was plotting against you,

You did believe it, and condemned to death your most faithful vassal, who had just recovered for you at Bellevert the crown of



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victory that was slipping from your temples.

Montaner and Almodia had an appointment, and when surprised by the guard of this infamous man, it had been his good fortune to save your daughter from the fangs of a wolf.

Lanza, pretending that you had declared his rival a traitor, instantly gave orders for his execution; and your daughter, in order to escape the odious presence of her

persecutor, took refuge during your absence in the Convent of Villasegol. There you will find her, and she will doubtless tell you why she has remained in retirement since your return from Palestine.

It is my believe that she feared this vile assassin would persuade you to promise her hand in marriage. Now, Count Guillen, you know all; and, now in your presence and with your permission, I challenge this



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despicable impostor, Lanuza, to a duel to death."

Mad with rage, Lanuza retorted: "I know you, Strausberg, y o u traitor! You are Montaner's accomplice, I accept your challenge, al t h o u g h I know that you are only a low-born."

"Silence!" thundered the Count who feared a conflict among his nobles. 'Silence!, all of you retire; and you Strausberg, and Lanuza, be prepared for t h e encounter within

three days.'

The palace was instantly deserted, and the Count despatched his son to seek Almodia at the Convent of Villasegol.

### VIII

On the day appointed for the duel, the first faint glimmering of dawn, found the inhabitants of Puigcerda swarming about the Arena like bees about a hive.

Everybody was discussing the probable result of the "Juicio de Dios"



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[The Judgment of God,] for, according to the general belief, in the ancient times, heaven always preserved the life of him who had justice upon his side.

Some were inclined in favor of Strausberg; others in favor of Lanuza.

The blast of a trumpet resounded, and the multitude turned to behold Lanuza wearing over his armor a mantle of green velvet embroidered in silver, and mounted upon

a superb black horse. His enormous shield, not ungracefully handled, bore beneath a radiant golden sun, the inscription: "always the same."

Flourishing a heavy lance, he entered the enclosure preceded by his second, who opened the gates amid the sound of martial instruments.

Almost at the same instant the "Knight of the Eagle" appeared at the opposite side, mounted upon a fiery white steed



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whose mane swept the ground, and clad in the same armor which he had worn in his triumphant assault upon the walls of Arcas. Richly wrought, upon his shield he displayed the incomprehensible words: "You die by the hand of the dead."

The seconds divide the space; the combatants lower their lances, and at the sound of the trumpets, rush madly toward one another.

Their encounter was

terrible. S t r a u s b e r g lurched forward in his saddle and barely escaped a fall; his antagonist had already fallen.

T h e Knight's lance had cleft Lanuza's shield, and penetrating his corslet, the fatal iron broke off, and part of it remained lodged in his breast.

Strausberg, rushed upon him w i t h naked sword crying in a wild voice: "You die by the hand of the dead. Infamous impostor. I am Montaner!—



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Confess your villainy or I shall finish the work I have begun."

Montaner then revealed his countenance and a shout of universal joy rang out from the multitude.

"Ah, y o u scoundrel!" cried Lanuza; "you owe your life to your treachery and baseness, and t h e wiles of your servant, Ramon, hwo w a s charged with your execution. I a m satisfied, however, with having caused your martyrdom and that of

your adored Almodia. A curse upon you and upon her!”

And unsheathing the dagger which he wore suspended from his girdle, he buried it to the hilt in his throat. The blood gushed forth freely upon Montaner but before death claimed his sinful soul he had thrice repeated the malediction.

Count Guillen arose and approached Montaner with open arms. “Noble youth,” he said, “For-



give the injustice to which my blind confidence in this man has led me. I shall endeavor to make reparation for the evil that I have wrought; and if my daughter's hand is the reward you desire, your fidelity has proved you a most worthy suitor."

Surrounded by an enthusiastic multitude which rent the air with acclamations, they awaited the entrance of Almodia who had just arrived.

The timid young girl

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was too reserved to give expression to her joy in the presence of her father; but Montaner, who could not restrain the impetuosity of his passion, caught Almodia in his arms and bestowing upon her the endearing epithets, beloved, betrothed, wife, he bore her in triumph to the throne room.

But who can describe the exstasy of the lovers?

Then, for the first time, Almodia learned from Montaner's own lips the



story of his glorious victory; and both rejoiced to find in Ramon instead of a base betrayer, a most loyal and valiant servant.

He it was, indeed, who had informed Lanuza of the lover's appointment, but with excellent reasons. A lost letter having fallen into the hands of the former, the shrewd Ramon who had neither time nor opportunity to communicate with the lovers, pretended to sell their secret, offering to yield Montaner in-

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to his hands on the condition that Lanuza would entrust the enterprise to him alone. Lanuza then placed his guard at the disposal of Ramon who after thrusting a slip of paper under Almodia's door advising her of her lover's peril, hastened in search of Montaner while there was yet time for his escape.

But the guard encountered the wolf, and were eager to pursue it; and thus resulted the inop-



portune seizure of Montaner.

It was Lanuza's believe that death at the hands of his trusted servant would be doubly bitter to his rival; therefore he readily assented to the conditions proposed by Ramon, and it was in accordance with his orders that the latter and his prisoner entered the thicket unaccompanied.

There Ramon thought it would be an easy matter to save his master and reveal to him what had tak-

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en place; but just as he was about to speak, he fancied that he detected two of his soldiers spying upon him through the foliage-

Thereupon he unsheathed his sword, making a faint of killing Montaner, and dragged him into the depth of a ravine, where he said, to him: "If you would save your own life and Almodia's, escape with all possible haste from the Count's domains."



Without further explanation he hurried to rejoin his guard.

Montaner although he did not know by whom the warning was given, resolved to heed it; and rejoined the army as the unknown cavalier when Count Guillen departed for the Holy Land.

Ramon, after having assured Lanuza, of his rival death, was desirous of informing Almodia of the true state of affairs; but no opportunity pre-

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sented itself until the night of the storm, when he followed her to the ruins on the way to the Convent and rescued Almodia and Ines from their prison, after the destruction of the arch.

As soon as the two young women had recovered sufficiently from the shock, Almodia, having learned all, entreated Ramon to accompany them as far as the Convent of Villasegol, where she remained until her father's



return from Palestine.

R a m o n recognized Montaner upon the battlefield, despite the disguise of his armor, but fearing his anger, presented himself before his master in full armor, with the mysterious letter imposing upon him the condition of silence until the conclusion of his narrative.

Ramon's fidelity was rewarded by a place of distinction in the army; and he continued to be Montaner's trusted friend.

The valiant Strausberg, a friend of the young general whom he so closely resembled, perished in the assault upon the walls of Jerusalem.























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